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THE GENESIS OF THE ATTENTION IN THE EDUCATIVE PROCESS¹

EDUCATION is suffering from a sort of dual personality. Its psychology and practise move along in more or less parallel lines without the one greatly interfering with the other. Evidence that interest, when it exists, must always follow attention to the idea or group of ideas which called it out, does not deter the enthusiastic teacher from giving this interest an external source instead of ascribing it to the mind.

Attention results from the mind's acquiescence in the focal presence of a particular idea or group of ideas. This is true whether the attention be of the so-called passive or active variety, since the only difference between the two lies in the complexity of the latter. In "voluntary" attention, more than one attraction is offered, and, each presenting inducements, the mind receives the one with more or less consciousness of what it has lost in giving up the other. This consciousness of deprivation, together with certain muscular sensations, probably makes up the feeling of effort which has caused this form of attention to be popularly thought active. Attention means a certain arrangement of the content of consciousness, which gives clearness to one idea or group of ideas, and produces comparative, though not equal, obscurity of the others. Change of attention requires a redistribution of the content, and this is accompanied by a re-

¹ Read before the joint meeting of the American Psychological Association and Section L—Education; American Association for the Advancement of Science, Minneapolis, December, 1910.